Senator Blumenthal / 5G
Feb 6, 2018
Transcript

Mr. Blumenthal:
Mr. Chairman, thank you for having this hearing. We've heard from a lot of witnesses, from you today and others previousy, about the very important potential of 5G technology. It promises to bring us a new era of connectivity with Internet speeds as much as five times faster than what we have today, with much lower latency. And that's all a good thing, but 5G, as you well know, also uses higher frequency waves that don't travel as far and will rely on a network of hundreds of thousands — potentially millions — of small cell sites. And the question then is: are there any health implications, any public safety implications, to those additional sites that are likely to be located close to homes, schools, workplaces, and closer and closer to the ground? Correct?

Mr. Gillen:
Correct, Senator. Yes.

Mr. Blumenthal:
So, in December of 2018, I sent a letter to FCC Commissioner Carr asking him to cite for me recent scientific studies demonstrating the safety of this technology: what research has been done, where has it been published and compiled. He has, (inaudible), failed to do so and just echoed the general statements of the FDA — which shares regulatory responsibility for cell phones with the FCC. If you go to the FDA website, pretty unsatisfactory. There basically is a cursory and superficial citation to existing scientific data saying, quote, "The FDA has urged the cell phone industry to take a number of steps, including support additional research on possible biological effects of radiofrequency fields for the type of signal emitted by cell phone." I believe that Americans deserve to know what the health effects are, not to prejudge what scientific studies may show, and they deserve also a commitment to do the research on the outstanding question. So my question for… for you, particularly, Mr. Gillen, and Mr. Berry: how much money has the industry committed to supporting additional independent research? I stress independent research. Is that independent research ongoing? Has any been completed? Where can consumers look for it? And we're talking about research on the biological effects of this new technology.

Mr. Gillen:
Thank you, Senator. And I thank you for your focus on the issue. Safety is paramount. And as you alluded to, we rely on the expert agencies, rely on the findings of the FDA and others, as to the requirements to keep all of us safe. There are no industry-backed studies, to my knowledge right now. I'm happy to visit with you as to what opportunities you think there needs to be more studies. And we're always for more science. We also rely on what the scientists tell us.

Mr. Blumenthal:

So essentially, the answer to my question how much money: zero.

Mr. Gillen:
I can certainly follow up with you, Senator. To my knowledge there's no active studies being backed by industry today.

Mr. Blumenthal:
Anybody else know of industry commitments to back research, fund it, support it, to ascertain, scientifically, the health effects?

Mr. Berry:
Senator, I'm not aware either. But I do know that with small cells, especially, you're going to have lower power levels. And of course, as from a carrier perspective you want to be able to manage interference so that that interference is the lowest interference possible. So I would… I would think that some of those studies, or some of that information, could be utilized in… in looking at the health consequences. But no, I'm not aware of any….

Mr. Blumenthal:
So there really is no research ongoing. We're kind of flying blind here — so far as health and safety is concerned. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.